Jim Henson's™
THE STORYTELLER™
Tale Three of Four
Witches
ARCHAIA™
MATTHEW DOW SMITH

The Phantom Isle

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Jim Henson's™ The Storyteller™ Witches

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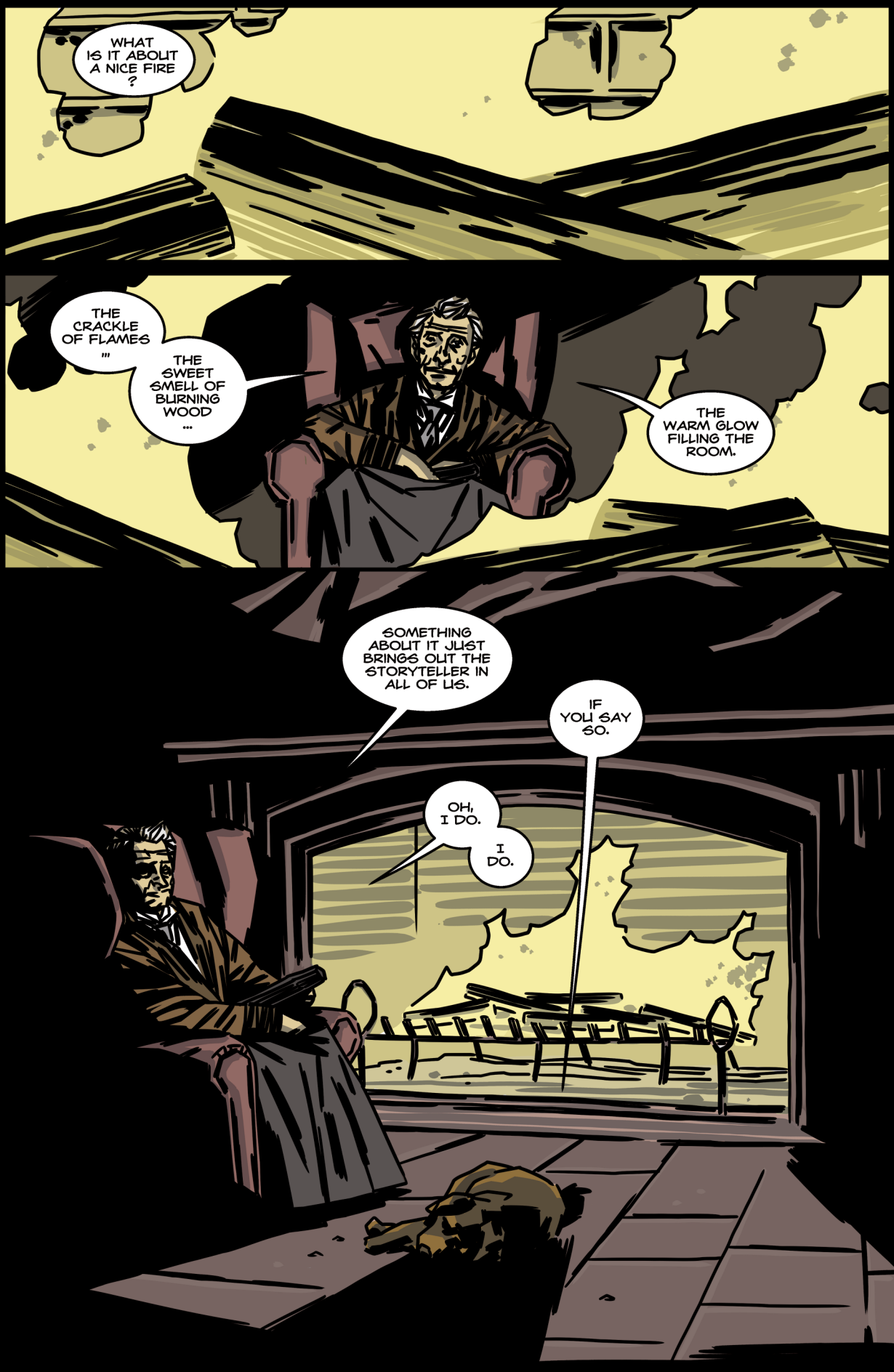
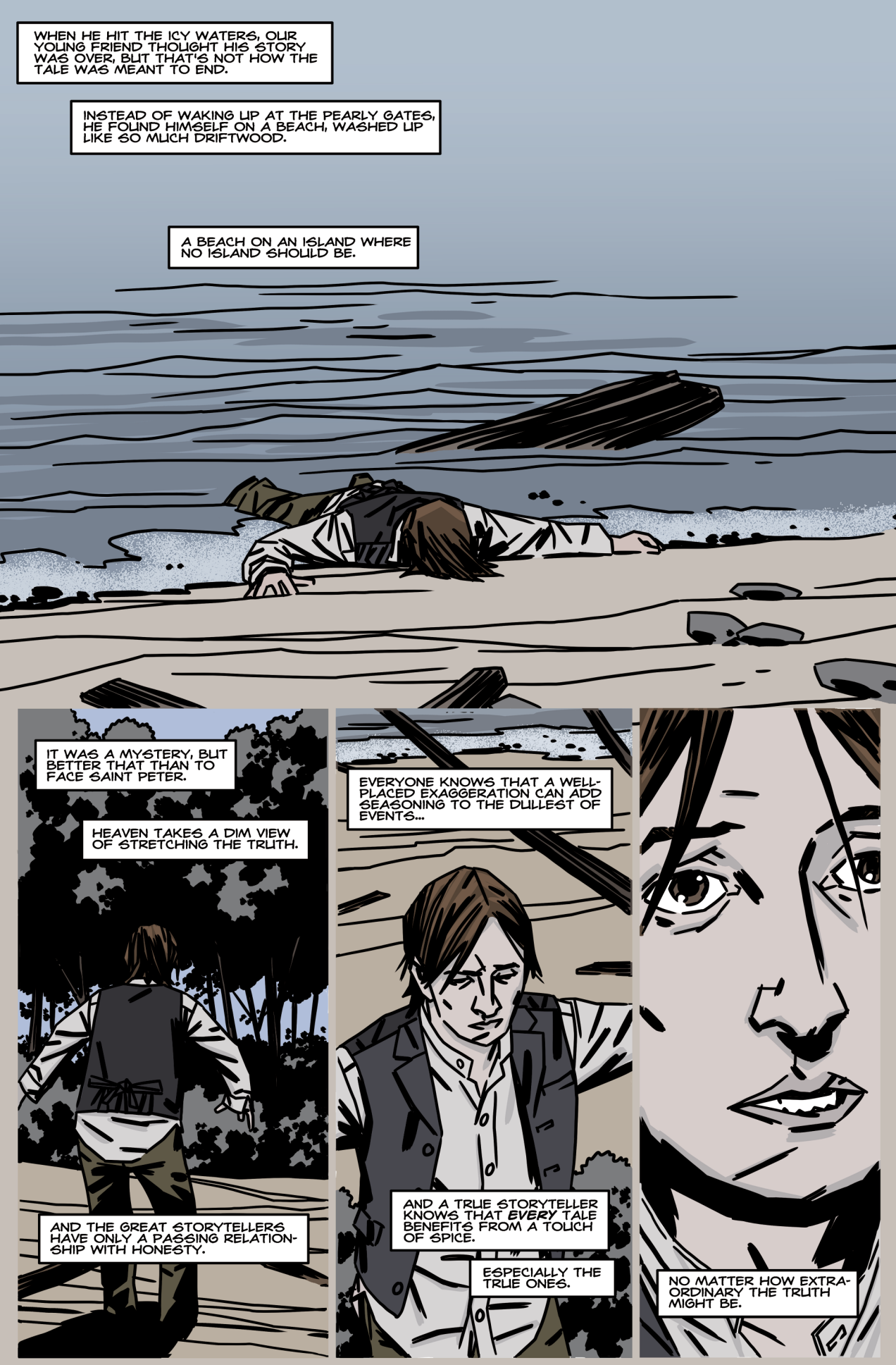
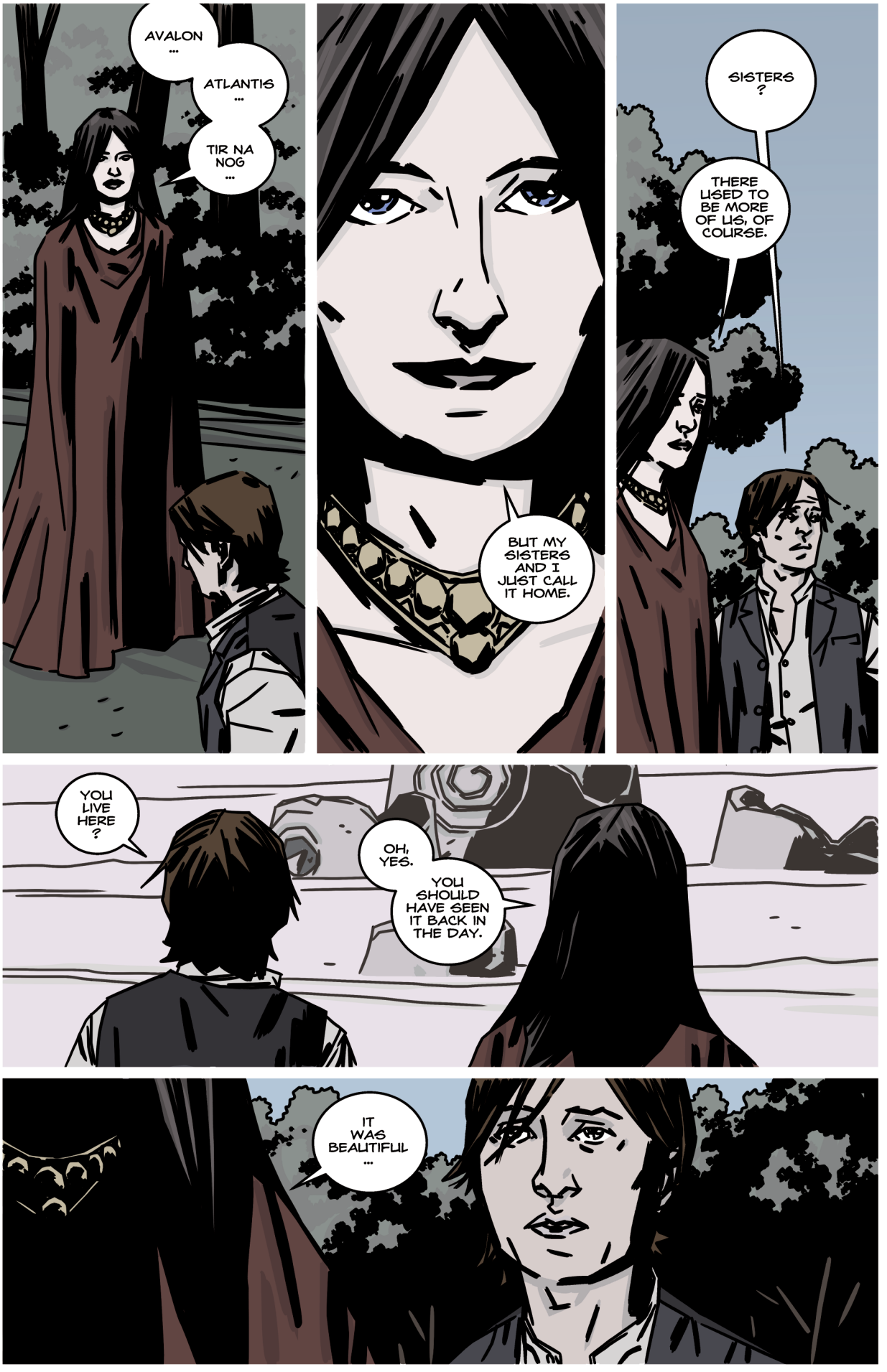

WHAT IS IT ABOUT A NICE FIRE ?
THE CRACKLE OF FLAMES ...
THE SWEET SMELL OF BURNING WOOD ...
THE WARM GLOW FILLING THE ROOM.
SOMETHING ABOUT IT JUST BRINGS OUT THE STORYTELLER IN ALL OF US.
IF YOU SAY SO.
OH, I DO.
I DO.

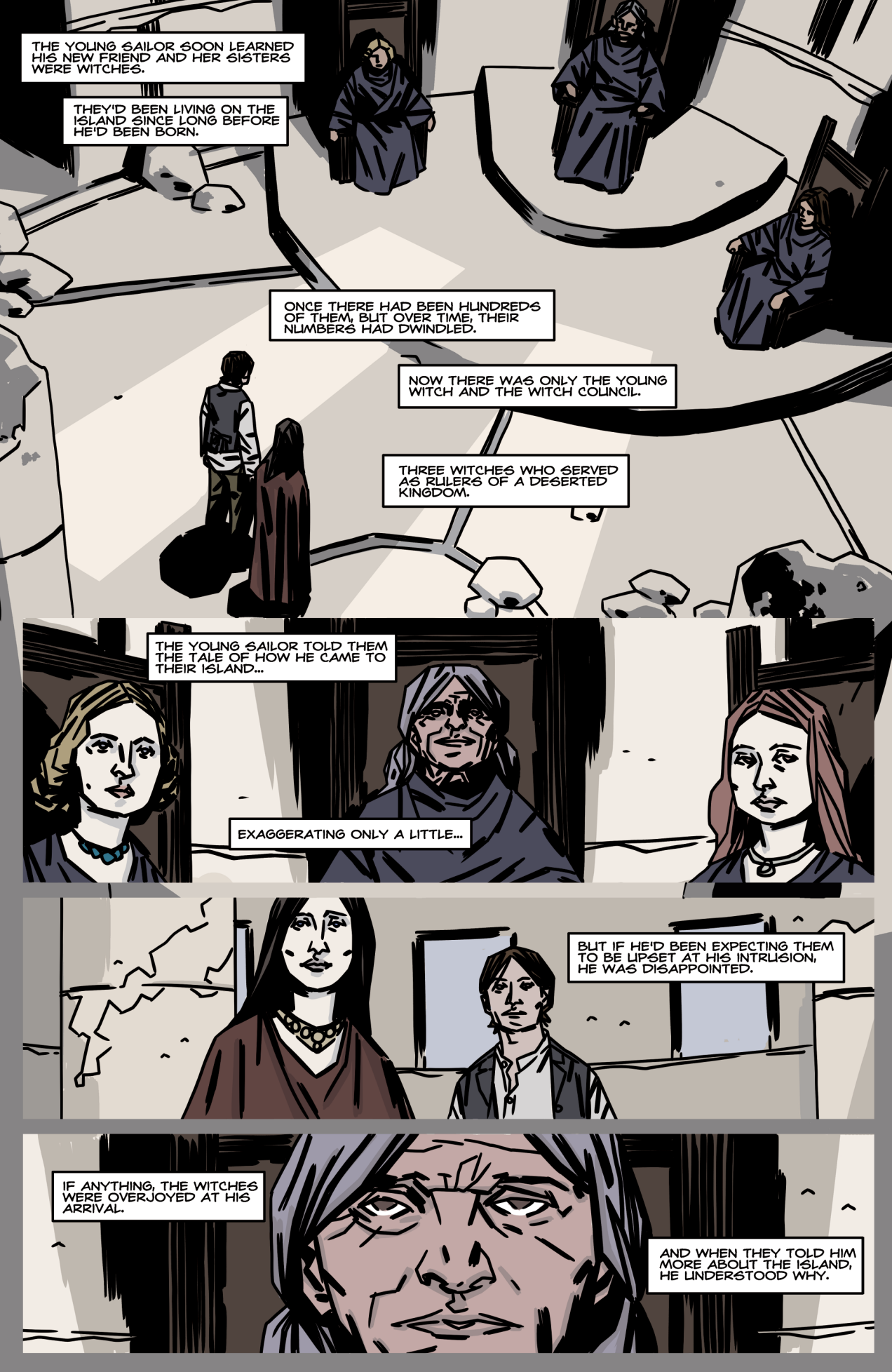
ANY TIME THERE'S MORE THAN ONE PERSON AROUND A FIRE, STORIES ARE NEVER FAR BEHIND.
IT'S JUST IN OUR NATURE.
WE TAKE A SEAT AROUND THE FLAMES AND OUR TONGUES LOOSEN, OUR IMAGINATIONS RELAX, AND THE WORDS "ONCE UPON A TIME" OR "YOU'LL NEVER BELIEVE WHAT HAPPENED" JUST SPILL FROM OUR LIPS.
TALL TALES, FISH STORIES, AN EPIC POEM OR TWO...
YOU'LL HEAR THEM ALL AROUND A ROARING FIRE.
AND SOME OF THEM WILL EVEN BE TRUE.
SO ...
LIKE STORIES, DO WE ?

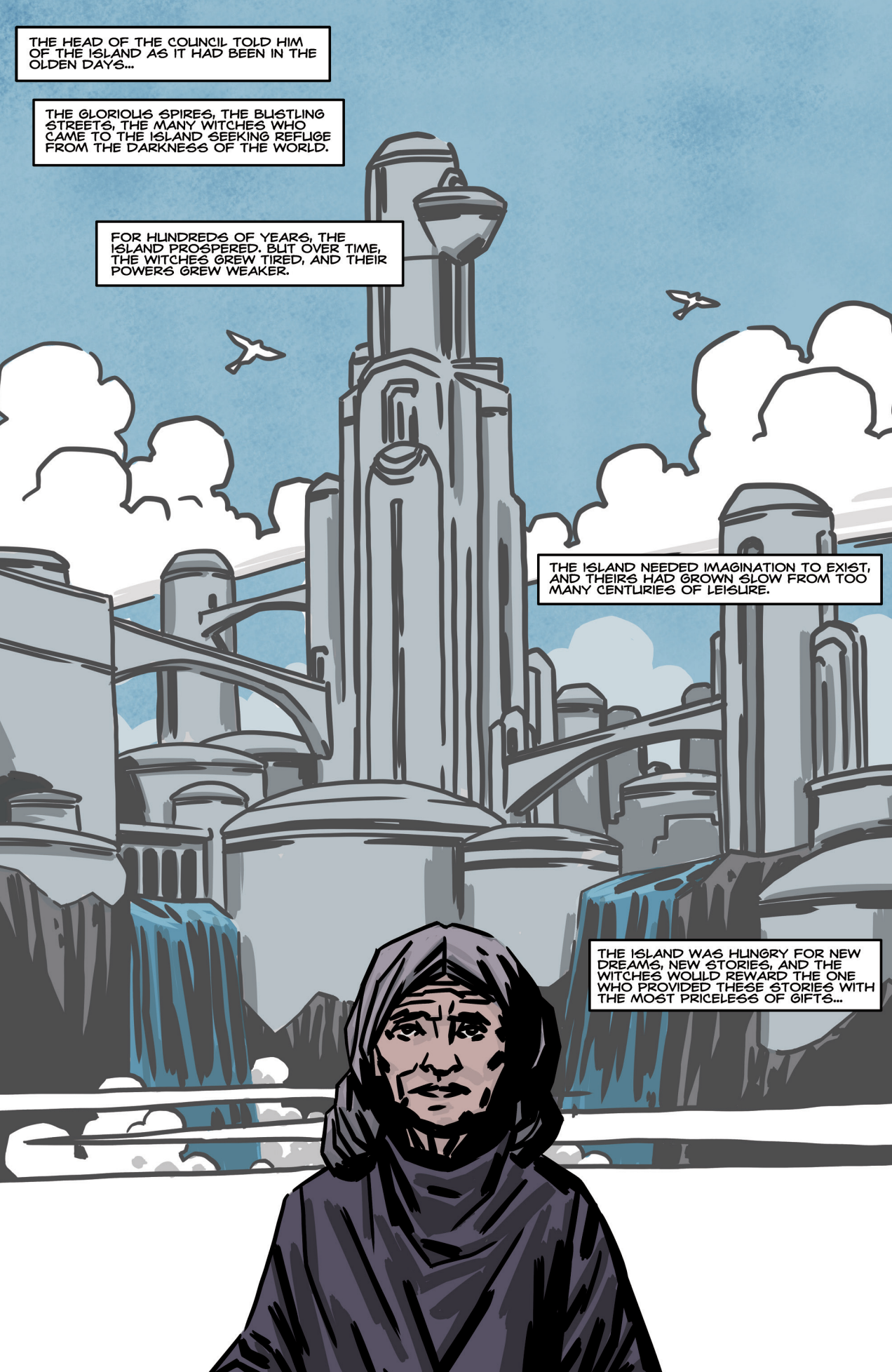
I HAVE A STORY FOR YOU.
IF YOU'D BE AT ALL INTERESTED IN HEARING IT.
A STORY ABOUT STORIES, ACTUALLY.
OR AT LEAST ABOUT A MAN WHO LOVED TO TELL STORIES.
SOMEONE LIKE YOU AND ME.
HE WAS A SAILOR BY PROFESSION, A TELLER OF TALES BY PASSION.
BUT IT WAS A PASSION THAT SERVED HIM WELL ON THE LONG NIGHTS AT SEA.
EVERY NIGHT, HIS FELLOWS WOULD SET HIM DOWN ON A BARREL AND LISTEN TO HIS STORIES UNTIL THE WEE HOURS...
PASSING THE TIME UNTIL THE SUN CAME UP AGAIN.
WHICH IS HOW HE CAME TO BE ON DECK THE NIGHT THEY STRUCK A REEF OFF THE COAST OF CORK.
AND WENT DOWN.

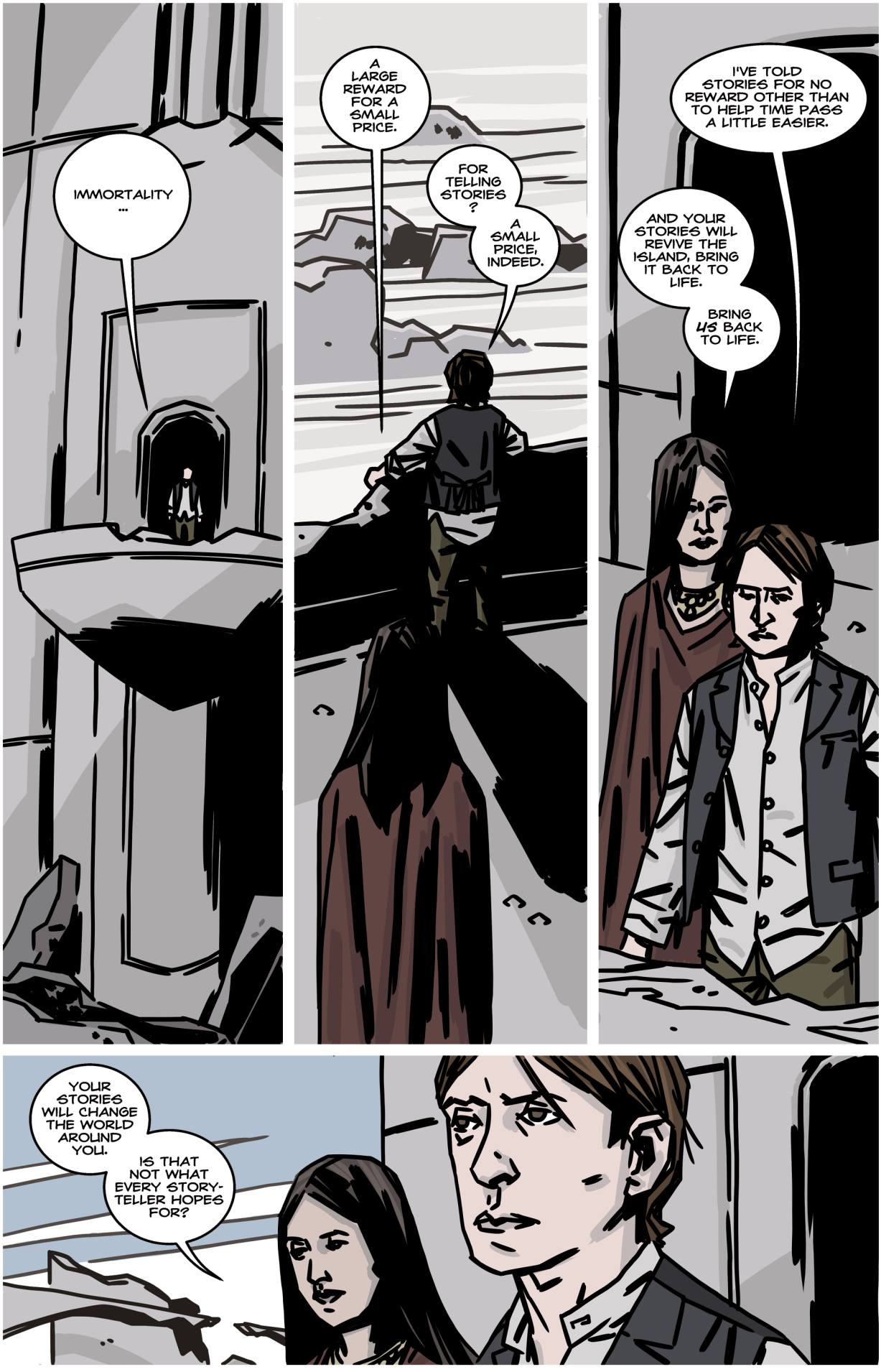

WHEN HE HIT THE ICY WATERS, OUR YOUNG FRIEND THOUGHT HIS STORY WAS OVER, BUT THAT'S NOT HOW THE TALE WAS MEANT TO END.
INSTEAD OF WAKING UP AT THE PEARLY GATES, HE FOUND HIMSELF ON A BEACH, WASHED UP LIKE SO MUCH DRIFTWOOD.
A BEACH ON AN ISLAND WHERE NO ISLAND SHOULD BE.
IT WAS A MYSTERY, BUT BETTER THAT THAN TO FACE SAINT PETER.
HEAVEN TAKES A DIM VIEW OF STRETCHING THE TRUTH.
AND THE GREAT STORYTELLERS HAVE ONLY A PASSING RELATIONSHIP WITH HONESTY.
EVERYONE KNOWS THAT A WELL-PLACED EXAGGERATION CAN ADD SEASONING TO THE DULLEST OF EVENTS...
AND A TRUE STORYTELLER KNOWS THAT *EVERY* TALE BENEFITS FROM A TOUCH OF SPICE.
ESPECIALLY THE TRUE ONES.
NO MATTER HOW EXTRAORDINARY THE TRUTH MIGHT BE.

AND SO IT IS A GREAT IRONY THAT SUCH A FINE STORYTELLER...
WITH HIS QUICKNESS TO EXAGGERATE AND EMBELLISH...
SHOULD FIND HIMSELF IN THE ONE PLACE ON ALL THE EARTH THAT TRULY NEEDED NEITHER TO DESCRIBE IT.
WHAT IS THIS PLACE?
THE ISLAND HAS BEEN KNOWN BY MANY NAMES OVER MANY YEARS...

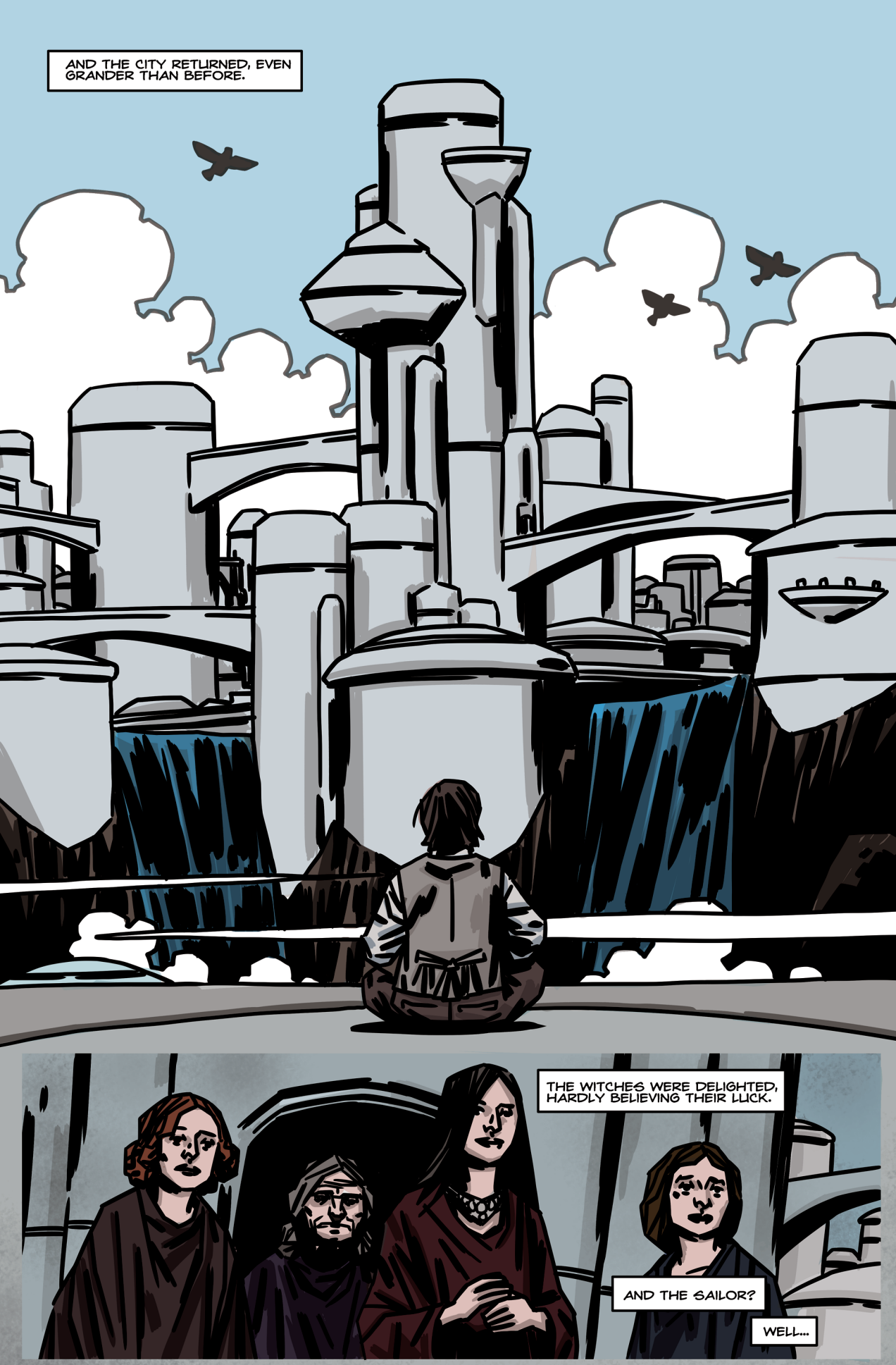

AVALON ...
ATLANTIS ...
TIR NA NOG ...
BUT MY SISTERS AND I JUST CALL IT HOME.
SISTERS ?
THERE USED TO BE MORE OF US, OF COURSE.
YOU LIVE HERE ?
OH, YES.
YOU SHOULD HAVE SEEN IT BACK IN THE DAY.
IT WAS BEAUTIFUL ...

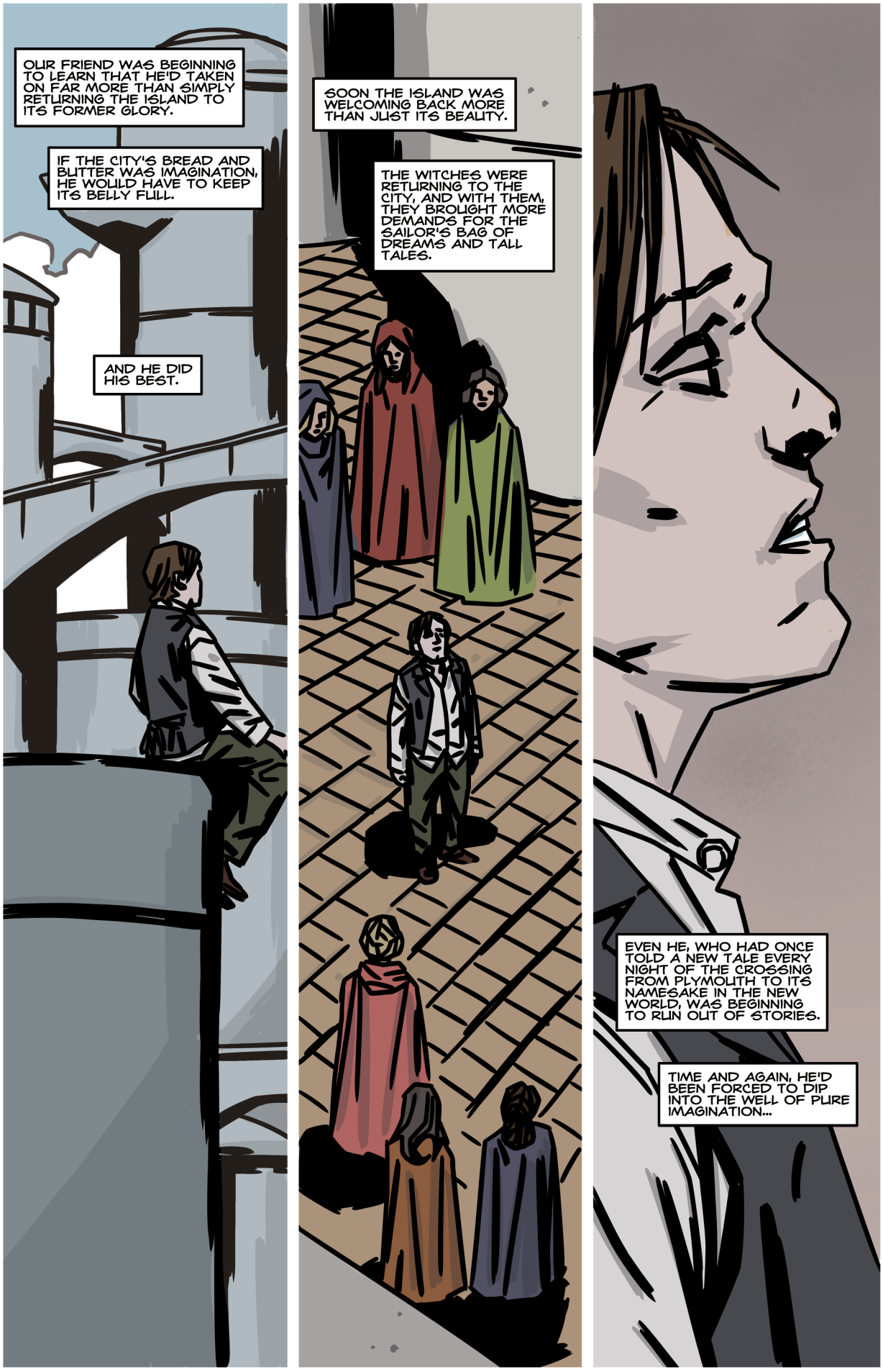

THE YOUNG SAILOR SOON LEARNED HIS NEW FRIEND AND HER SISTERS WERE WITCHES.
THEY'D BEEN LIVING ON THE ISLAND SINCE LONG BEFORE HE'D BEEN BORN.
ONCE THERE HAD BEEN HUNDREDS OF THEM, BUT OVER TIME, THEIR NUMBERS HAD DWINDLED.
NOW THERE WAS ONLY THE YOUNG WITCH AND THE WITCH COUNCIL.
THREE WITCHES WHO SERVED AS RULERS OF A DESERTED KINGDOM.
THE YOUNG SAILOR TOLD THEM THE TALE OF HOW HE CAME TO THEIR ISLAND...
EXAGGERATING ONLY A LITTLE...
BUT IF HE'D BEEN EXPECTING THEM TO BE UPSET AT HIS INTRUSION, HE WAS DISAPPOINTED.
IF ANYTHING, THE WITCHES WERE OVERJOYED AT HIS ARRIVAL.
AND WHEN THEY TOLD HIM MORE ABOUT THE ISLAND, HE UNDERSTOOD WHY.


THE HEAD OF THE COUNCIL TOLD HIM OF THE ISLAND AS IT HAD BEEN IN THE OLDEN DAYS...
THE GLORIOUS SPIRES, THE BUSTLING STREETS, THE MANY WITCHES WHO CAME TO THE ISLAND SEEKING REFUGE FROM THE DARKNESS OF THE WORLD.
FOR HUNDREDS OF YEARS, THE ISLAND PROSPERED. BUT OVER TIME, THE WITCHES GREW TIRED, AND THEIR POWERS GREW WEAKER.
THE ISLAND NEEDED IMAGINATION TO EXIST, AND THEIRS HAD GROWN SLOW FROM TOO MANY CENTURIES OF LEISURE.
THE ISLAND WAS HUNGRY FOR NEW DREAMS, NEW STORIES, AND THE WITCHES WOULD REWARD THE ONE WHO PROVIDED THESE STORIES WITH THE MOST PRICELESS OF GIFTS...

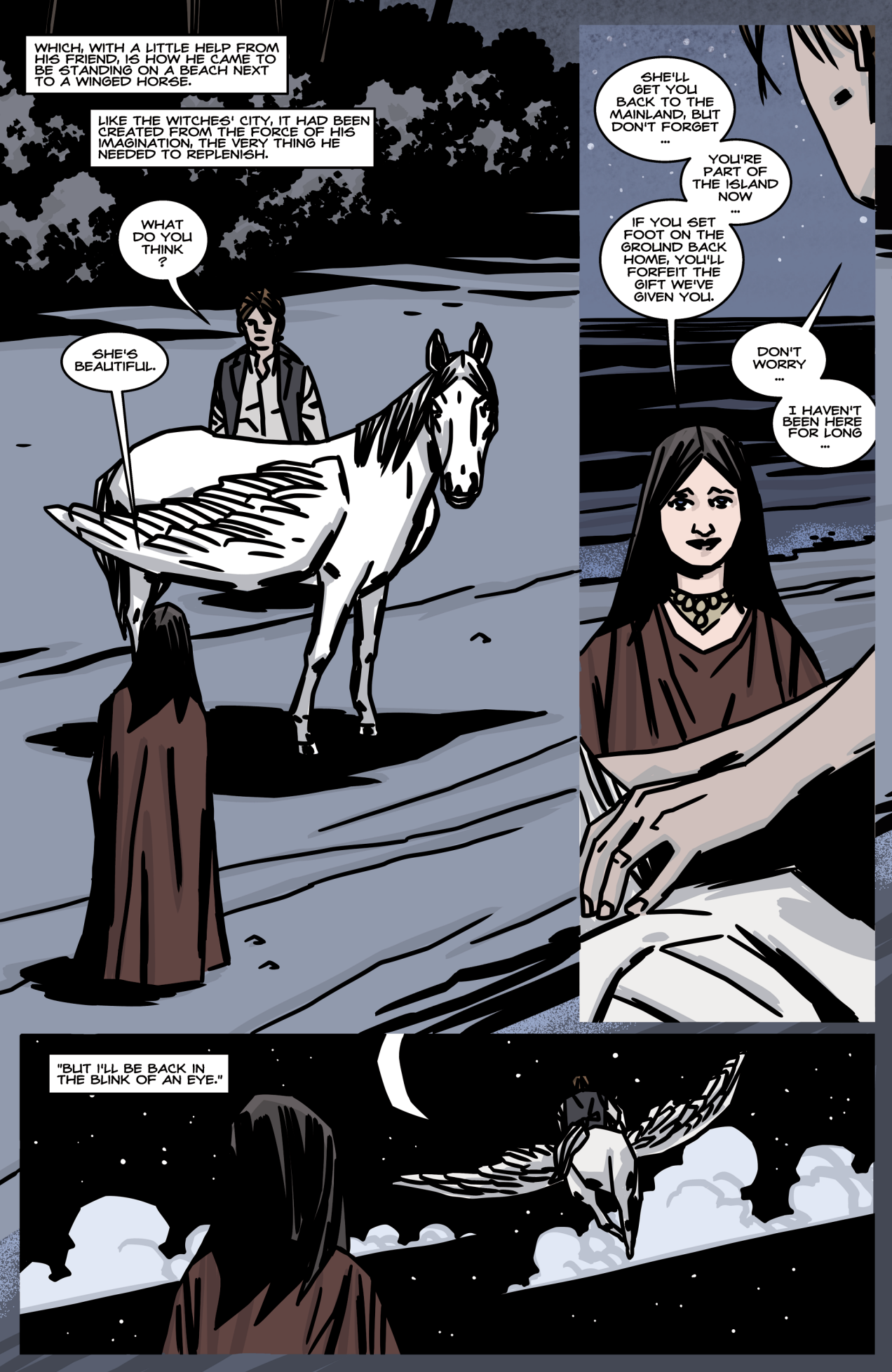

IMMORTALITY ...
A LARGE REWARD FOR A SMALL PRICE.
FOR TELLING STORIES ?
A SMALL PRICE, INDEED.
I'VE TOLD STORIES FOR NO REWARD OTHER THAN TO HELP TIME PASS A LITTLE EASIER.
AND YOUR STORIES WILL REVIVE THE ISLAND, BRING IT BACK TO LIFE.
BRING *US* BACK TO LIFE.
YOUR STORIES WILL CHANGE THE WORLD AROUND YOU.
IS THAT NOT WHAT EVERY STORY-TELLER HOPES FOR?

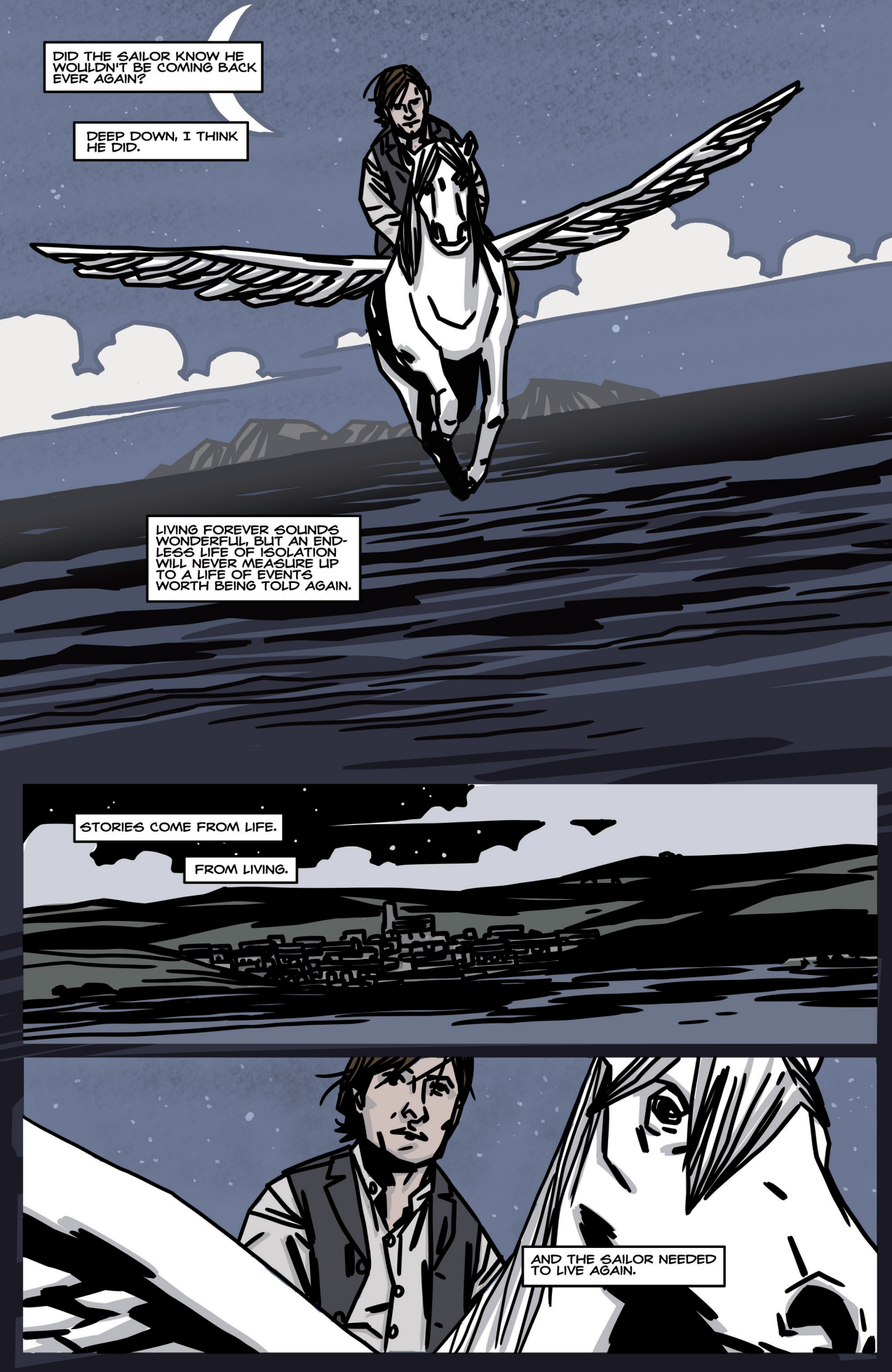
AND THAT'S WHAT THE SAILOR DID.
STORY BY STORY.
STONE BY STONE.
HE CHANGED THE WORLD AROUND HIM.
THE TALE OF FINN'S MIDNIGHT RIDE WITH THE FAIRY KING?
THE FOUNDATION FOR A SPIRED CONFECTION THAT COULD ONE DAY REACH THE SUN ITSELF.
THE STORY OF A SAILOR'S MATE WHO FELL IN LOVE WITH A SELKIE AND GAVE UP HIS HUMANITY FOR A SET OF FINS ONLY TO FIND SHE'D GIVEN UP HER FINS FOR A FINE PAIR OF HUMAN LEGS?
AN AVENUE OF INTRICATE CONCENTRIC STONES NEARLY TOO BEAUTIFUL TO WALK ON.
IF THE CITY NEEDED IMAGINATION, THERE WAS NO FINER CHOICE THAN THE YOUNG SAILOR.

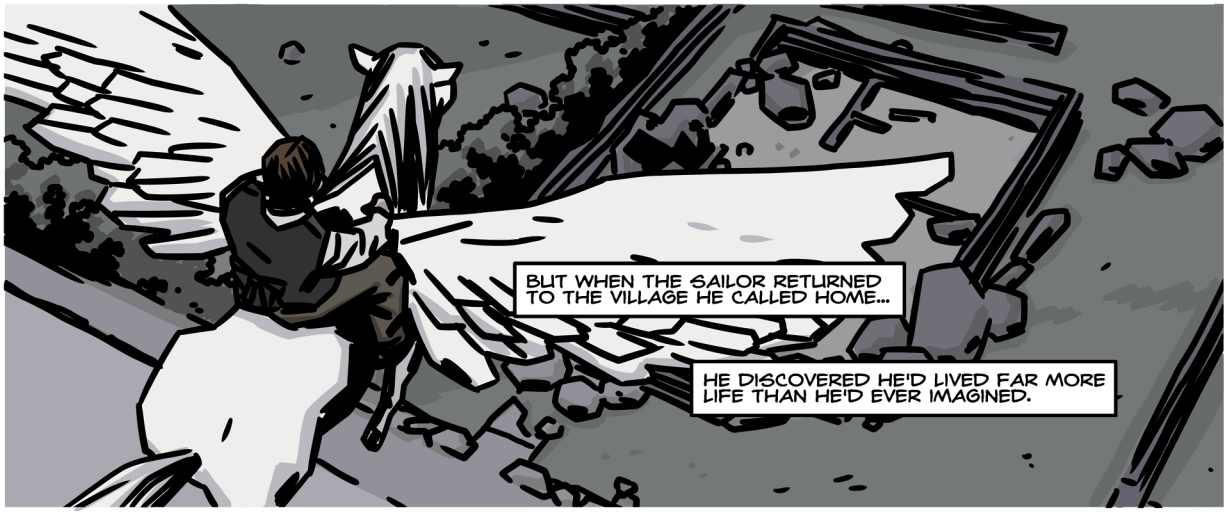

AND THE CITY RETURNED, EVEN GRANDER THAN BEFORE.
THE WITCHES WERE DELIGHTED, HARDLY BELIEVING THEIR LUCK.
AND THE SAILOR?
WELL...


OUR FRIEND WAS BEGINNING TO LEARN THAT HE'D TAKEN ON FAR MORE THAN SIMPLY RETURNING THE ISLAND TO ITS FORMER GLORY.
IF THE CITY'S BREAD AND BUTTER WAS IMAGINATION, HE WOULD HAVE TO KEEP ITS BELLY FULL.
AND HE DID HIS BEST.
SOON THE ISLAND WAS WELCOMING BACK MORE THAN JUST ITS BEAUTY.
THE WITCHES WERE RETURNING TO THE CITY, AND WITH THEM, THEY BROUGHT MORE DEMANDS FOR THE SAILOR'S BAG OF DREAMS AND TALL TALES.
EVEN HE, WHO HAD ONCE TOLD A NEW TALE EVERY NIGHT OF THE CROSSING FROM PLYMOUTH TO ITS NAMESAKE IN THE NEW WORLD, WAS BEGINNING TO RUN OUT OF STORIES.
TIME AND AGAIN, HE'D BEEN FORCED TO DIP INTO THE WELL OF PURE IMAGINATION...

AND THE WELL WAS BEGINNING TO RUN DRY.
LIKE THE CITY, STORIES REQUIRE A SUSTENANCE OF THEIR OWN.
FUEL FOR CREATION.
AND HE'D BEEN DEPRIVED OF THAT FUEL FOR FAR TOO LONG.
SOMETHING IS TROUBLING YOU, STORY-TELLER.
I NEED TO LEAVE THIS PLACE ...
EXPERIENCE LIFE AGAIN ...
FIND NEW STORIES TO TELL.
BUT I DON'T KNOW HOW.
THERE *IS* A WAY, OF COURSE ...
JUST TELL A STORY.
AND HE DID.


WHICH, WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM HIS FRIEND, IS HOW HE CAME TO BE STANDING ON A BEACH NEXT TO A WINGED HORSE.
LIKE THE WITCHES' CITY, IT HAD BEEN CREATED FROM THE FORCE OF HIS IMAGINATION, THE VERY THING HE NEEDED TO REPLENISH.
WHAT DO YOU THINK ?
SHE'S BEAUTIFUL.
SHE'LL GET YOU BACK TO THE MAINLAND, BUT DON'T FORGET ...
YOU'RE PART OF THE ISLAND NOW ...
IF YOU SET FOOT ON THE GROUND BACK HOME, YOU'LL FORFEIT THE GIFT WE'VE GIVEN YOU.
DON'T WORRY ...
I HAVEN'T BEEN HERE FOR LONG ...
"BUT I'LL BE BACK IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE."


DID THE SAILOR KNOW HE WOULDN'T BE COMING BACK EVER AGAIN?
DEEP DOWN, I THINK HE DID.
LIVING FOREVER SOUNDS WONDERFUL, BUT AN END-LESS LIFE OF ISOLATION WILL NEVER MEASURE UP TO A LIFE OF EVENTS WORTH BEING TOLD AGAIN.
STORIES COME FROM LIFE.
FROM LIVING.
AND THE SAILOR NEEDED TO LIVE AGAIN.


BUT WHEN THE SAILOR RETURNED TO THE VILLAGE HE CALLED HOME...
HE DISCOVERED HE'D LIVED FAR MORE LIFE THAN HE'D EVER IMAGINED.

SIX MONTHS ON THE ISLAND HAD BEEN HUNDREDS OF YEARS BACK HOME.
HIS FAMILY WAS GONE, HIS HOME WAS A CRUMBLED RUIN, HIS FRIENDS WERE LONG DEAD.

EVERYTHING HE'D KNOWN HAD DISAPPEARED IN THE TIME HE'D BEEN AWAY.
HE HAD NO LIFE TO RETURN TO.
AND IN THAT MOMENT, HE WAS TRULY LOST.

ONE TOUCH OF HIS FOOT ON THE SOIL OF HIS HOME...

AND HE WOULD LOSE HIS IMMORTALITY, AS WELL.

ALL THE YEARS HE'D BEEN AWAY WOULD RETURN TO HIS BODY.

ALL THAT REMAINED FOR HIM WAS ONE FINAL STORY.
ONE LAST TALE.
THE STORY OF WHO HE WAS AND WHERE HE'D BEEN.
THE WITCHES, THE ISLAND, THE MAGICAL WINGED HORSE...
IT WOULD BE THE GRANDEST STORY HE EVER TOLD.
ALL HE NEEDED WAS ONE LAST AUDIENCE.
AND WANDERING THE STREETS OF HIS VILLAGE...
SALTY BARREL
EACH STEP ADDING DECADES TO HIS BODY...
HE FOUND IT.

AND THAT, MY FRIENDS, IS MY CUE.
TIME'S UP, I'M AFRAID.
LAST CALL, AS IT WERE.
BUT YOU HAVEN'T FINISHED THE STORY.
THAT CAN'T BE THE END.
WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?
DID HE GO BACK TO THE ISLAND?
WHAT HAPPENED TO THE SAILOR, YOU ASK?
ONLY *HE* KNOWS.

FRANK !
THAT OLD BLOKE ...
WHO WAS HE?
OLD BLOKE ?
WHAT OLD BLOKE ?
THERE WAS A YOUNG FELLA' CAME IN A BIT AGO.
HE'S SITTING RIGHT OVER THERE ...
HUH ...
NOW THAT'S A BIT ODD.

"NEVER SAW HIM LEAVE."
I HOPE YOU'RE NOT HERE TO TAKE ME BACK.
TOO LATE FOR THAT, I THINK.
I TOLD YOU NOT TO TOUCH THE GROUND.

THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO FOR YOU NOW.
I TOLD MY STORY.
THEN HE DIED.
RIGHT THERE ON THE HILLS OVERLOOKING THE TOWN WHERE HE'D BEEN BORN.
THE YOUNG WITCH GATHERED THE SAILOR'S REMAINS AND CARRIED HIM BACK TO THE ISLAND.
AND WHILE HE WAS GONE, HIS STORIES WOULD LIVE ON.

SOME PEOPLE THINK STORIES COME FROM THIN AIR, OLD FRIEND ...
BUT EVEN THE MOST FANTASTIC STORY COMES FROM LIVING.
ALL IT TAKES IS SOMEONE TO LIVE THAT LIFE ...
AND SOMEONE WHO WANTS TO HEAR ABOUT IT.
NOT TO MENTION A NICE FIRE FOR THEM TO SIT AROUND.

A new tale spun next month...

Vasilissa the Beautiful

Based on the unproduced *THE STORYTELLER* teleplay from The Jim Henson Company Archives

adapted and illustrated by Jeff Stokely

ARCHAIA EDITORIAL
NOVEMBER 2014

SPOTLIGHT:
ROCKET SALVAGE #1

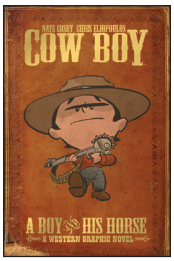
Primo Rocket used to be the fastest speeder-racer in the galaxy, but after a crash that sealed the fate of his space-station-city home, Rio Rojo, Primo has resigned himself to life as a lowly spaceship salvage yard owner. However, his two "kids"--harvest clone Beta, and Beta's genius girl-clone Zeta--can't seem to keep out of trouble. When the dysfunctional family suddenly becomes the target of an intergalactic manhunt, the family has to come together to save their home. With blow-your-gamma-gasket action and true heart, this new series will make you want to pick up a wrench and strap in for the ride.

IF YOU LIKE THIS YOU'LL LIKE:

PANTALONES, TX VOL. 1 HC

From *Rocket Salvage* writer Yehudi Mercado *(Guardians of the Galaxy: The Universal Weapon)*, this Saturday-morning cartoon throwback series follows the adventures of a band of misfit kids in a rural Texas town as they try to outwit, outrun, and outprank the ever-vigilant, taco-truck-riding sheriff and his giant chicken.

COW BOY VOL. 1 HC



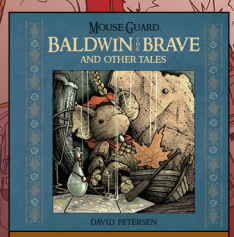
Nate Cosby *(Pigs, Jim Henson's The Storyteller)* and Chris Eliopoulos *(Franklin Richards, Misery Loves Sherman)* team up for the Eisner Award-nominated *Cow Boy*, an all-ages story of a young bounty hunter determined to send his entire outlaw family to jail. He travels the Old West on a horse that ain't his, and won't stop 'til every one'a his kin's in the clink.

THIS MONTH FROM **ARCHAIA**

BUTTERFLY #3

JIM HENSON'S FRAGGLE ROCK: JOURNEY TO THE EVERSPRING #2

THE LAST BROADCAST #7



MOUSE GUARD: BALDWIN THE BRAVE AND OTHER TALES HC

JIM HENSON'S THE STORYTELLER: WITCHES #3

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the Phantom Isle

written and illustrated by Matthew Dow Smith

When a young man shipwrecks on a mysterious island ruled by a council of witches, he has the choice of freedom or staying on the isle where he does not age. The lure of immortality is hard to resist, but it comes with a price he may not be willing to pay.

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